

# Portion Control

A real trouble spot for some people trying to lose weight or maintain a healthy weight is controlling the size of food portions. It's not surprising. Most restaurant dishes are actually 2-3 servings; processed and packaged foods offer 2 or more servings, yet list fat and calorie counts for 1 serving.

This section shows you how to control portions and avoid overeating. Take a few minutes now to review the portion control information that follows. Then plan your portion control goals for the week and record your results as you progress.

## Using an Accurate Eye

As children we had an amazing sense of food portions - mud pies in uniform sizes, and easily discerning whether a sibling got more candy. But then we grew up and lost it. Food portions are now vague - a bowl full or bucket full of ice cream seem almost equal when we dish it out for ourselves. Yet serving size is critical to weight loss. You will consume fewer calories by eating a few french fries than a heaping plate of pasta.



So how do you regain the accurate eye of your youth? If you have a scientific streak, measurement is the key. Scales and measuring cups are the tools you need, and most nutrition books/recipes are written in this form. But if setting up your kitchen to look like an FDA lab isn't appealing, learning to eyeball portions will work. Like the best cooks, who use a pinch of this and a dash of that, you can learn to judge amounts.

As you train yourself, make mental notes of amounts and the size of the serving. Using the same utensils (spoons, ladles, pans) also can help keep your portions uniform. And be careful in restaurants - most serve 2 or 3 times regular portion sizes. Share an entree, or try an appetizer and vegetable side dish as your meal.

## Serving Size Made Easy

By using familiar objects you can begin to relate to these items. It's easy with fruits and vegetables which you'll want to eat the most anyway -since many grow in divided clusters or bunches; just learn how many of each make up a serving. Some examples:

- 1 cup cut fruit = a baseball
- 1 ounce cheese = 4 dice
- 3 ounces meat = deck of cards
- 1 cup lettuce = 4 green leaves
- 1/2 cup asparagus = 4 spears
- 1/2 cup broccoli = 3-5 spears
- 1/2 cup grapes = 15 grapes.

The great thing about thinking in portions is it's not disruptive when you're cooking for others. Low-fat/low-calorie healthy food is good for everyone, regardless of age or activity level. It just means you get 1 serving of a dish and your very active teenager gets 2 or 3. You won't feel left out by changing your eating habits - and you'll be teaching good, healthy eating to others. Combined with exercise, what you're doing is the best path to long-term weight control.

If you feel short-changed by reduced portions, give yourself some time to eat slowly and allow the food to actually reach your stomach - this takes about 20 minutes. You'll feel full with less food.



# My Mouth Runneth Over

## How much is enough?

As the bathtub fills, you can see when the water is deep enough to cover your body; when it starts spilling over the sides and flooding the bathroom, you know it's too much. Unfortunately, our bodies aren't the same - food doesn't start falling out of our mouths when we overeat. And we can't see inside ourselves, then stop once our stomachs have reached the right "level." We have to determine ahead of time how much food is enough, and how much is too much.

Planning is the key. It helps you decide on portion size - using knowledge and objectivity vs. hunger. You know it's a bad idea to go shopping when you're hungry. Shopping lists can turn into wish lists when your stomach's grumbling. It's also not wise to plan the week's menus when you're hungry. You can get frustrated trying to figure out what fresh vegetables to buy when what you really want is a huge bowl of ice cream.

(A good time to plan meals is about 30 minutes after you've finished dinner.)

When planning your meals, keep this in mind: women need to eat at least 1200 calories a day, and men need at least 1500.

Remember, eating regularly is an important key to long-term weight management. Some people find just eating breakfast helps them lose weight - skipping meals can send the message you're starving, and your body comes to the rescue by retaining fat.

Use the easy planning tool on the next page. The right side gives you a ready-made shopping list. And in addition to encouraging



regular meals, this also will help you save time. You won't have to keep running out to pick up items you forgot (and be tempted by the cookie aisle).

	What to Eat	What to Buy
<b>Breakfast</b>		
<b>Snack</b>		
<b>Lunch</b>		
<b>Snack</b>		
<b>Dinner</b>		
<b>Breakfast</b>		
<b>Snack</b>		
<b>Lunch</b>		
<b>Snack</b>		
<b>Dinner</b>		
<b>Breakfast</b>		
<b>Snack</b>		
<b>Lunch</b>		
<b>Snack</b>		
<b>Dinner</b>		

Here are more ideas for keeping the calories down as you plan your meals:

- ☼ Replace saturated fats (such as in butter and mayo) with olive, corn, or safflower oil
- ☼ Use cheese sparingly - it has as much saturated fat as butter
- ☼ Experiment with spices as well as flavored mustards and vinegars to make food interesting
- ☼ Accent pasta and rice main dishes with bits of high quality lean meat/poultry
- ☼ Keep only low-fat/low-calorie snacks on hand (fruits, plain popcorn, vegetables) to avoid temptation.

You might want to treat yourself to a few of the hundreds of great cookbooks out there on creating healthy meals. (But don't browse that section of the bookstore when you're hungry, either.) Then educate yourself and have fun experimenting. Planning to eat better and lose weight doesn't have to be boring or limited.

## **5 Ways to Control Portions**

1. **Divide and individually** wrap servings ahead of time - try separating grapes into smaller clusters, slicing an extra large bagel into its true 4 servings, and cutting cheese into dice-sized cubes.
2. **Measure unfamiliar foods** to determine serving size until you feel comfortable being able to eyeball amounts.
3. **Use smaller plates** and bowls for eating - reasonable portions won't look so tiny.
4. **Treat yourself** to high calorie foods now and the - just limit portion size (remember your goal is to lose weight, not to suffer).
5. **Enjoy what you eat** - relax and take time to savor the flavor.